

fact sheet

ALTERNATIVE WORK OPTIONS IN MASSACHUSETTS STATE GOVERNMENT

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE WORK OPTIONS PROGRAM?

Employers must keep up with changes in society. In the 1920's, child labor laws and the forty- hour work week were innovative responses to changes in American lifestyles. Today, attitudes and ideas about work are changing in response to the needs of new labor market forces: women, single parents, two wage-earner families, students, elderly workers and workers with disabilities. These employees often experience conflicting demands between their work and personal lives.

As an employer, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is keenly aware of these changing workforce trends. The Alternative Work Options Program was established to give Massachusetts state employees greater flexibility in their work schedules. The program encompasses six scheduling strategies, all designed to enable employees to combine their personal and work responsibilities more easily. Alternative Work Options are especially appropriate for employees with young children or elders needing daily care, employees who are also students, employees with disabilities, and workers who are making a gradual transition to retirement, among others.

The Alternative Work Options Program enables the state to recruit many talented, creative individuals who would otherwise be unable to work for the Commonwealth. The options also provide current state employees with more control over their worklives - increasing morale and productivity.

WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVE WORK OPTIONS?

Listed below are brief descriptions of each of the Alternative Work Options.

PART-TIME: Part-time employees are scheduled to work at least half-time, but less than full-time, in state positions.

JOB-SHARING: Job-sharing enables two (or more) individuals to divide the responsibilities assigned to one specific position. The combined number of hours job-sharers work each week is equal to that of a full-time employee.

FLEXTIME: Flextime permits full-time employees to set their own schedules within limits established by agency management and collective bargaining agreements. Arrival and departure times may vary, as can the number of hours worked each day. Employees must work the total number of hours that are required of full-time employees each week. Each agency establishes "core hours", during which all employees must be at work regardless of individual flextime schedules. Compressed Work Weeks are a form of flextime.

STAGGERED WORK HOURS:	This scheduling option enables employees to set arrival and departure times to fit their needs. The same schedule is followed every day, five days a week.
INTERMITTENT EMPLOYMENT:	Intermittent employees work less than half-time over the period of a calendar year. Their schedules are irregular, based on agency need and the employees' availability.
SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT:	Seasonal employees are hired for a designated period of time that is less than a full calendar year, such as pool lifeguards in the summer or ice skating rink attendants in the winter.

HOW DO EMPLOYEES USE ALTERNATIVE WORK OPTIONS?

The Alternative Work Options Program encourages employees to use the options as tools in tailoring work schedules that meet their particular needs. For example: parents of very young children may wish to join or return to state service on a part-time or job-sharing basis, so they have more time to spend with their babies. While many employees appreciate the versatility of flextime, this option is ideal for someone caring for an elderly or ill relative. Frequent doctors' appointments or necessary medical treatments can be smoothly accommodated by a flextime schedule. Employees who are also students may choose the staggered work hours option so they can attend classes in the late afternoon. And college students with prolonged vacations find seasonal employment to be very useful.

These are just a few of the ways Alternative Work Options enable state employees to achieve maximum flexibility in their work schedules, helping them to balance their personal and work lives.

ARE ALTERNATIVE WORK OPTIONS AVAILABLE AT ALL AGENCIES AND IN ALL POSITIONS?

If you or other people at your agency are interested in starting one of the Alternative Work Options at your worksite, discuss the idea with your supervisor or manager. You can get information and assistance from the Human Resources Division, One Ashburton Place, Room 301, Boston, Massachusetts 02108, Telephone 617-727-3555.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

- ?? State Agency Personnel Office
- ?? Your union representative if you are a union member
- ?? Human Resources Division
One Ashburton Place, Room 301
Boston, MA 02108
(617) 727-3555